The role of language in the climate change issue – a cross-disciplinary initiative
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Tackling climate change and transitioning towards a low carbon and sustainable society constitute one of the most pressing issues facing humanity today. Opinions and attitudes on important questions in this context are represented in multiple contemporary discourses. These discourses take many forms and are characterised by intricate multivoicedness. Divergent and convergent voices (scholars from different fields, politicians, NGOs, media, citizens) are variously represented, explicitly or implicitly. Accounting for such discourses, their role in societal and individual interactions and their influence on opinions and actions presents a major challenge for linguistic and discursive analysis.

Current research shows that the meaning people ascribe to climate change (e.g. their understanding of the phenomenon, their perception of risks involved, the corresponding value judgments and emotional reactions) is closely related to how climate change is portrayed in the communication. One reason for the crucial role of language in this context is that climate change has in recent years moved from being predominantly a physical and scientific phenomenon to being simultaneously a political, social, ethical, cultural and communicational phenomenon. Thus, there is a need to know more about to what extent and in what way language matters.

This was the point of departure for establishing the cross-disciplinary project LINGCLIM, short for *Linguistic representations of climate change discourse and their individual and collective interpretation.* LINGCLIM's overarching research question was formulated as follows: to what extent and in what way does language matter? In order to investigate some of the many issues related to this question, we established a cross-disciplinary collaboration including researchers from climate science, political science, psychology and expertise from computational science for analysing large volumes of text.

In the first part of this talk I will present some of the main components of the LINGCLIM project, discuss reasons for developing the cross-disciplinary collaboration and introduce some general thoughts about challenges and opportunities in this kind of collaboration. In the second part I will present some results from the project, with a focus on two areas: first, an introduction to what we have called "climate change narratives", mostly limited to the textual level of analysis; and second, a discussion of the notion "survey discourse", corresponding to citizens' freely formulated answers to open-ended survey questions related to the issue of climate change.